

The Hippies Publish Paper—on Paranoia and Joy

"The crazies are coming, the crazies are coming."—Suburban nightmare.

By Philip D. Carter
Washington Post Staff Writer

It is spring. In a cluttered room above an art gallery just north of DuPont Circle, a young man leans out a wide-open window with the breeze in his shoulder-length hair. He stares, chuckling softly, at a building across Connecticut Avenue and wonders aloud if the CIA and FBI are watching and listening over there with their X-ray telescope that sees through walls and their super-secret parabolic mike.

"Let's blow up the White House," he whispers out the window. "Dy-na-mite."

There is no reaction.

But across the avenue where the sunlight bounces off the windows and everything looks normal and real, it is easy to imagine a couple of invisible, crewcut Junior Agents in Training. They are wondering what in hell is going on over here in the office of the Washington Free Press.

Over here is where the crazies hang out. Among them are some of the quickest young minds in Washington and some of the thickest, some of the most doctrinaire and some of the least. They co-exist somehow in a state of perpetual paranoia and joy, making up a revolution as they go along.

Every two weeks, when things click, they publish an underground newspaper. Like others of its kind that have sprung up around the country in recent years, the Free Press specializes in radical politics, hippie and post-hippie life styles, and what some people call pornography.

Liberals who find fault with radicals for poor judgment and bad taste think the Free Press stinks. So do most pragmatic radicals. Conservatives usually don't know it exists until they catch their children reading it.

But most people who run things in Washington have managed, until recently, to ignore the struggling little offset tabloid.

Founded three years ago as an intercollegiate paper for Washington area college students, the Free

Press has mirrored the local underground's unsteady evolution from hippiedom to radical activism.

Recently the paper has accurately reflected the underground's own schizophrenic condition. Among its 10 active editors and its regular contributors are 1967 vintage flower children, impassioned advocates of psychedelic drugs, mystics, neo-Marxists, free-style New Leftists, high school revolutionaries and proponents of "alternative life styles" as various as communal living and nudism.

The current issue features a five-page attack on Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge James H. Pugh, who recently asked a grand jury to investigate the paper for possible indictment on charges of subverting the County government.

It also includes an article and photograph identifying an alleged undercover narcotics agent, a description of how to make a "poor man's phosphorous grenade," attacks on the CIA and American University and a report on student radical activity at Western High School.

Every article has a common aim: "turning on" the kids, age 14 to 18, who form the bulk of the Free Press' readership, turning them on to a way of life and outlook on living that their parents can neither understand nor share.

The average age of the Free Press editors is about 23 (a statistic that, like all others concerning the journal, is open to dispute.) There is no editor-in-chief.

Instead, periodically, one or two editors will go on a "power trip," stage a quiet coup, and direct the paper's operations for an issue or two. But in practice little formal editing is done.

People who walk in with stories to print usually get them printed. The paper's make-up and psychedelic artwork are typically handled by whoever happens to be around.

The economics of the Free Press operation are simple. All of which may or may not get distributed, depending

on weather and staffers' moods—usually costs \$1000.

Mail subscriptions are relatively few. Instead, the paper depends for survival on street and magazine stand sales in Georgetown and the DuPont Circle area, where most of its readers flock on weekends and vacations, and in the suburbs, where most of them come from.

The paper sells for 20 cents a copy within the District, 25 cents out of town. On a sunny Saturday in Georgetown, a hard worker can sell 200. The vendor gets 10 cents a copy, the Free Press gets the rest.

Full-page advertisements sell for \$300. Classifieds, which cost 50 cents a line, comprise the paper's most closely read feature.

"Attractive threesome," reads one ad in the latest issue. "Two gals, 22, bisexual, and guy, 26, seek other young, attractive gals or couples with same interests."

Display ads are more conventional. The current 24-page issue sports barely 20, advertising movies, rock concerts, hip clothing and paraphernalia and even a Capitol Hill bar.

Most of these ads are geared to the tastes and interests of the area's affluent middle class young. The one glaring omitted exception is records.

"We don't take record company ads any more," a Free Press staffer explains. "We decided we couldn't help that kind of enormous Establishment that was making a profit by co-opting our music."

Such fastidiousness has not made the Free Press editors rich. Each—including 21-year-old Chris Weber, the present more-or-less universally acknowledged first among equals on the staff—draws exactly \$15 a week.

They somehow manage to live on it. By choice and necessity, most—including the four females on the staff—live together in a couple of communal houses near DuPont Circle.

It is a world in which all telephones are presumed to be broken, in which all agents lurk in every all-night restaurant, where au-

thority—"The Man"—is ever-ready to call out the storm troops.

It is a self-proving thesis the Free Press lives by: if you push The Man hard enough, he will push back. He will shut down the Free Press, he will arrest those who print it.

But without The Man, the Free Press would not and could not exist.

Until recent weeks, The Man didn't pay much attention and Free Press circulation dwindled. Now, despite troubles with printers—and because of well-publicized troubles with the law—circulation is climbing again.

He may not be across the street with telescope and parabolic mike, but The Man is finally reacting. Spring is here, and the crazies are coming, the crazies are coming.

"We're ecstatic," says Free Press' crazy Lincoln Pain.

STAT